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ABSTRACT

The English language arts program in Trinidad and Tobago is handicapped by several conditions. Overcrowding is a problem and reduces the chances for learning. The syllabus in use is outmoded and evidences little understanding of children's language problems. The primary school program is directed toward the Common Entrance Examination. Observations of particular classes reveal additional problems. Questionnaires answered by teachers provide information on their attitudes and teaching practices. The development of new materials and methodologies is needed. An adequate description of the vernacular and its influence on the children's learning must be prepared and published. Teachers' colleges must begin to provide their students with a knowledge of the linguistic problems of the country and instill in them an attitude of experimentation in their teaching. (Author/VM)

ED 061806

PROJECT 15

Away Robin Run !

A CRITICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE TEACHING OF THE LANGUAGE ARTS IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOLS OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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The title "Away Robin Run!" (See Page 51 of the report) was chosen because it exemplifies three major weaknesses of our English teaching programme: firstly, it demonstrates the strong interference problem presented by the grammar of the vernacular to the child's acquisition of English; secondly, it is an example of the cultural irrelevance of much of the material used in the schools; and thirdly, it presents to the learner a language pattern that, in spite of its occurrence in poetry, is atypical and unproductive and of no value to him in the acquisition of the target language.

P R E F A C E

This description of the teaching of the language arts in the schools of Trinidad and Tobago is the first final version publication to come out of the Institute of Education research project which is investigating the problems of learning and teaching English Language in Trinidad and Tobago.

The design and development of this project have been prompted as much by the interest of the researchers in the phenomena of language learning and language interference as by their awareness of the dissatisfaction among educationists, teachers, employers and parents with the level of language competence of the products of the local school system.

The study which has been undertaken is not an exercise in theoretical linguistics nor is it research for its own sake. It is an attempt to apply principles of scientific analysis to a problem which is primarily linguistic and secondarily educational in order to arrive at a clear understanding of difficulties, the resolution of which is imperative to educational development in Trinidad and Tobago.

1. BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

It is assumed that:

A. The vast majority of children in Trinidad and Tobago use as their normal means of communication languages, dialects or forms of speech which are systemically different from internationally acceptable English.

B. The teaching methods, teaching materials, textbooks and teacher training orientation were neither selected, designed nor adapted to take into account the systemic differences between the pupils' normal means of communication and internationally acceptable English and are, therefore, irrelevant or limited in relevance.

C. The examinations and tests for knowledge of English complement the methods, materials, textbooks and teacher orientation in their irrelevance or limited relevance.

/D. .....

D. The most effective materials and methods are those which are based upon a scientific description of the language of the learner carefully compared with a parallel description of the language to be learned.

2. PROJECT PROPOSAL AND AIMS

The ultimate purpose of our research is the provision of unequivocal guidelines for the development of classroom materials, methods of instruction, teacher training and testing which are fully applicable to the linguistic context of Trinidad and Tobago. The design of the present project includes therefore:

(a) study of the spoken and written English of schoolchildren in Trinidad and Tobago;

(b) assessment of the methods and materials currently used for English teaching as well as the conditions under which language teaching is conducted;

(c) evaluation of the currently used tests and examinations for knowledge of English.

The kind of questions which the study aims to answer are the following:

1. What is the structure of the normal means of communication of the child?

2. How does this differ from internationally acceptable English? (I.A.E).

3. What kind of language does the child produce when he feels obliged to "speak properly"?

4. How does this latter differ from I.A.E.?

5. What evidence in the written language of the child is there of the retention of structures of his spoken idiom and what of the acquisition of I.A.E.?

6. What new linguistic problems are evidenced in his written language?

7. How far do the emphases of the textbooks currently in use co-incide with the areas that are found to require special attention as a result of questions 1-6?

/8. .....

8. How far do the present teaching methods relate to the problems revealed by questions 1-6?

9. What are the implications of the answers to questions 1-8 for the training of teachers and for the development of textbooks?

10. Are the types of tests used by teachers in the classroom situation really applicable to the problems which the children appear to be experiencing?

11. Are the examinations for English realistic tests of progress in acquisition of I.A.E.?

12. To what extent does the present curriculum effect an ordered progression of the child's competence in the use of I.A.E.?

This report gives some answers to the last five questions presented above.

/A .....

A CRITICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH IN THE SCHOOLS OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

The description of the Teaching of English contained herein is based on observation of teaching on the days when the project schools were visited for the purpose of recording, as well as on an analysis of questionnaires administered to all the teachers of the Infant Departments and Standards I to V of these schools. In addition, further longer visits were made in order to verify certain impressions. The schools represent a stratified random sample of the schools of the nation chosen on the basis of one school in twenty in each of the educational administrative districts, except in the case of Tobago where five schools were selected instead of the two that the sample called for. The reason for this departure was that since the linguistic history to Tobago is so different from that of Trinidad, a different ratio of sampling was necessary in order to include as many of the linguistic variations as possible.

The Project Schools

The schools selected in the project vary considerably in size and enrolment. There are:

4 schools with an enrolment of 200-300 pupils
6 schools with an enrolment of 300-400 pupils
5 schools with an enrolment of 400-500 pupils
5 schools with an enrolment of 500-600 pupils
4 schools with an enrolment of 600-700 pupils
3 schools with an enrolment of 700-800 pupils
2 schools with an enrolment of 800-900 pupils
1 school with an enrolment of 900-1,000 pupils

In the vast majority of cases, the school buildings are simple hall type structures with no attempt at providing separate classrooms for each class. Only three schools visited were built with individual classrooms in mind and already in one of these it has become necessary to accommodate two classes in each room.

The general impression created by some of these schools is one of drabness. Classes seem to have been squeezed into every corner of the buildings in the same way that five children are fitted into a desk designed for three. In two schools it was almost impossible to walk from one end of the building to the other since the

/desks...

desks of adjacent classes actually touched one another. In some schools there is little attempt to relieve the drabness of the walls except in a few cases by the presence of elaborate anatomical drawings which seem to cater more to the artist's fancy than to the needs of the children; and the inevitable school motto. One of the schools is housed in the parish church building. Nevertheless, it is included in the Ministry's records as a school building. In yet another school, two classes are permanently housed in the church building across the road from the school.

There are examples, however, of schools where Principals and teachers are making efforts, sometimes quite outstanding, to overcome the physical obstacles to teaching. There are schools where dividing partitions of hardboard have been erected to afford a certain degree of privacy for each class.

The teachers in the infant department show greater initiative and dedication in the extra work they put in to prepare materials for their classes and consequently there is greater evidence here of aids, illustrations and play materials than in the rest of the school.

PHYSICAL CONDITIONS AND THEIR EFFECTS

OVERCROWDING

The school enrolment graph, Fig. 2, gives a clear picture of the degree of overcrowding in the schools. It needs only to be explained that the formula of 1 pupil per 8 sq.ft. of floor space is the one used by the Ministry of Education and we have accepted this for convenience.

The figures reveal the following:

Degree of Overcrowding	No. of Schools
0%	5
0%-20%	7
20%-40%	7
40%-60%	8
60%-80%	1
80%-100%	1
over 100%	1

In 60% of the schools there is overcrowding of more than 20%.

In 36.6% of the schools there is overcrowding of more than 40%.

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The effects of overcrowding are far greater than appear at first glance. When a teacher has to fit three children into a desk designed for two, the result is not one, but three cramped and uncomfortable children. A school in which there is 40% overcrowding is in fact a school in which all the pupils experience some measure of physical discomfort, are deprived of adequate working room and are likely to suffer more greatly from irritableness and distraction than would normally be the case under better conditions. The teacher too, is put out by the fact that the number in his class is greater. He is faced with a wider range of ability and attainment, with added disciplinary problems, and a larger number of inattentive children.

In the cases of minor overcrowding, the only physical effect is the placing of a few extra desks in the classrooms or squeezing an extra child into some of the desks. But in the more extreme cases, Principals have had to use greater ingenuity in finding space - not floor space but roof space. Classes are placed wherever the eaves offer even partial shelter, In one school where four classes were permanently seated in the western corridor of the school, the children are drenched whenever the rain is accompanied by a westerly breeze, or, if there is no rain baked in the sun from 2.00 p.m. to the end of school.

In another school the overflow had spilled into the space under the school building and then into the quarters provided for the Principal. In one district the church doubles as a school on week days and classes are permanently established in two adjoining sheds. One approximately 20 x 15 feet houses three classes. Another class is seated in a lean-to shed with a roof 7 feet high at one end, and 5 feet high at the other. The floor area of this room is approximately 160 sq.ft. In another school which is being extended entirely by community effort, a class is conducted under the existing building in a space so confined that the teacher is unable to stand upright without injuring himself and has to sit to write on the blackboard.

NOISE

Noise might well be considered the offspring of overcrowding. In the schools where overcrowding was the greatest, the noise levels were the highest. Some schools were so short of space that it was not even possible to set up screens between the classes to ensure privacy. In one school the noise was so great that a singing lesson in which four classes were singing in chorus at one end of the school could

/not.....

not be heard at the other end less than seventy feet away. In situations like these even the inevitable children's classroom conversations have to be conducted at a higher pitch in order to be heard, and the teacher is compelled to shout if his voice is to carry to the back of his class. In several of these schools, the observers, standing at the back of the class, found it impossible to hear what the teacher was saying. It is understandable, therefore, that the children find some other kind of activity to interest them.

When in the afternoon we add heat to the previously mentioned ingredients of overcrowding and noise, and combine these in a poorly ventilated classroom, the recipe for teacher and pupil disintegration is complete. We have seen teachers, particularly in urban schools where overcrowding is greatest and outdoor facilities minimal, visibly wilt under the combined effects of these conditions. Little teaching can be done. Written work is set for the class and from then on the main effort is directed towards staying awake and controlling the noise. But the noise will not be controlled. The sound of the silence bell, when it is heard, brings only momentary relief and the pleadings of the principal over the public address system are awarded no more than a token mark of respect. There is nothing to do but wait for the final bell.

LACK OF WALL SPACE

The absence of dividing apartitions between classes has already been mentioned. However, it is important to state that apart from ensuring the privacy of a classroom, walls provide useful space for display of charts, maps, diagrams and pictures which can serve as talking points for English classes. Classes without partitions are deprived of almost all the rudimentary teaching aids save the blackboard.

LACK OF OUTDOOR SPACE

The need for playing space is very important for the physical and mental development of children. However, in our overcrowded schools outdoor space serves the additional purpose of classroom extension. The shade of a tree in the school yard or even outside the school grounds is often in great demand. Yet some schools cannot even list this as one of their facilities. In one school we saw a class huddled together under the shade of a coconut tree and another strung out in a line to avail themselves of such shade as is offered by an 8-foot wall at 2.00 p.m. Neither the coconut tree nor the wall were on the school premises.

/One.....

One must note here that while the above is an extreme case, the need for space outdoors is felt by all schools and the practice of taking classes in the shade of a tree is almost universal. As far as the teaching of English is concerned, it is often the only place where oral class work can be attempted with any degree of enthusiasm without disrupting the work of adjoining classes.

It must be stated that in the schools where the above conditions of overcrowding, noise and lack of privacy do not exist, the atmosphere of the classroom is very different and teachers do make use of the opportunities offered for displaying wall charts etc., and do make greater efforts at actual teaching. But the number of schools where this is the case is too small, only three - to invalidate the general picture given here.

(a) <u>The quest for silence</u>

There has developed within the teaching profession, a relentless pursuit of silence which seems to control every aspect of class work. Silent work is preferred to oral discussion; the silence bell, which has become ineffective mainly because it can no longer be heard above the din, has been replaced in some schools by the public address system through which the principals now plead for quiet. Even in some schools where the only noise is the result of legitimate classroom activity, some crusaders for silence, at the slightest murmur from a class run through the traditional rigmarole of "Hands up! out! down! Fold your arms and place your fingers on your lips." A certain degree of quiet <u>is</u> necessary as a prerequisite for work and for ease of communication, but so fruitless has been the quest for it, that silence has become a final goal to be pursued for its own sake and to be treasured on the rare occasions when it is found. Even in those few schools where separate classrooms house a single class and where teachers are free to engage in stimulating oral work, the 'golden' rule of silence is stressed to the neglect of the 'silver' speech.

An obvious corollary to the above is the emphasis on written work. But written work imposes on the teacher, the problem of correction. The solution lies in the selection of written work to be done. The bulk of written work done in the Language Arts is of the multiple choice or slot filling type which makes correction easy, but offers no opportunity for the pupils to express themselves creatively or originally. In addition to this, teachers have shown a strong preference for a system of immediate correction of work done. One item at a time

/is worked.....

is worked on the board and the children with the right answer present their books to be marked. While this system provides for immediate reinforcement of a good response, it is nevertheless extremely time-consuming and leads to slip-shod marking on the part of the teacher. Further, the teacher using this method consistently, ignores the less fortunate pupils who have wrong answers and who are most in need of help. In some cases, the teacher does not even check answers, but is satisfied with a show of hands from those who claim to have correct answers. Moreover, as in the case of Arithmetic, the teacher is more concerned with the answer than the method used by the child and often faulty work is rewarded with a tick and good efforts left unrecognised altogether.

(b) Over-dependence on the text book

The emphasis on written work and the lack of blackboard space are together at least partially responsible for the over dependence of the teacher on text books. The charts provided on page 48 indicate the number of texts prescribed for each class, as well as the number of the supplementary books used by the teacher. Teachers justify the multiplicity of books on the grounds that no single text covers the complete syllabus and that some authors treat certain aspects of the subject better than others. This is undoubtedly true, but all this ought to mean is that the teacher should be aware of these different approaches and have a wide range of texts at his disposal from which he can draw examples, methods and material. It is the physical conditions - the noise, over-crowding, and lack of blackboard and wall space, that make proper teaching impossible, and make it necessary for the pupils to own so many texts themselves, thus increasing the burden of cost on the parent. It is very disquieting to note that this trend increases the prospect of success for the children of the middle and upper classes, and severely diminishes the chances of the children of families in the lower income bracket who cannot afford to buy all the prescribed textbooks.

(c) Severe reduction of teaching

A serious self perpetuating phenomenon has appeared in the classrooms. The increase in noise that accompanied overcrowding in open-hall type schools has prevented the practice of oral work in the class, as well as militated against oral explanations and teaching on the part of the teacher. This has resulted in the over dependence on the text books which now reinforces the nonteaching that produced it. Continual testing and correcting have been substituted for teaching so that children

/learn.....

learn, (if they do at all), largely by repeatedly correcting mistakes which they continue to make because they never knew what was correct in the first place. The classic example of this is the "teaching" of "is and are" and "have and has" which are tested constantly in every class from infants to standard five without ever being properly taught or learnt. It has become, apparently, a standard time-filler used by teachers whenever they cannot be bothered to attempt anything new, or when they need to keep their pupils occupied for a while.

(d) Development of a buck-passing attitude on the part of teachers

In conditions as described above, the standard of teaching must fall and the level of achievement must decrease. Yet these conditions have existed for so long in the schools that teachers and administrators have come to accept them as the norm. They no longer consider them as factors that are hostile to education and that have to be overcome. This unquestioning acceptance of the situation causes teachers to fix the blame for low standards on everything else. The first to be blamed are the pupils themselves. Teachers talk endlessly about their lack of ambition, their playfulness, their 'broken English' which they stubbornly refuse to correct, and their general rebelliousness. Their parents, too, come in for their share of criticism for not providing the required books, not taking an interest in the children, not providing a suitable home environment for study and for keeping them away from school for the flimsiest of reasons.

Next in line for blame are the children's former teachers who did not cover the syllabus as required and who have thereby placed an added burden on them. The infant teachers who can lay the blame on the other teacher in the chain, protest that the home environment of the children is responsible for their inadequacies.

(e) Destruction of initiative

The lack of safe storage and display space in the schools has militated strongly against the teachers' exercising any initiative in the area of preparation of visual aids and displays. Instead, the emphasis has shifted from actual experience to the memorising of verbal descriptions and definitions. This practice reached its ultimate in one school which literally sits in the northern range where a teacher was trying to explain to the class what hills and valleys were by means of definitions and totally without reference to the reality just outside the window.

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(f) Development of undesirable children's attitudes

The attitudes of the pupils are also affected by the school conditions. The keen spirit of competition that exists in all classes but particularly in the Common Entrance classes, has generated an attitude of selfishness and individualism that is the very opposite of the virtues that one would hope the education process to develop. One only has to see the teacher write an exercise on the board to see how children react: without exception they crouch over their copy books lifting the section that is not being written on, to form a barrier to prevent their neighbours from copying. As the answer is written, the books are snapped shut to avoid leakage of the precious information contained therein. It is a pity that teachers have done nothing to discourage this attitude on the part of their pupils.

The overcrowding in the schools has necessitated:-

(a) a regime of tight supervision of the pupils;

(b) a lack of opportunity for discussion, questioning and expression of pupil opinion;

These have combined to produce or perpetuate:

(a) the highly authoritarian image of the teacher;

(b) children who unquestioningly believe whatever 'sir' or 'miss' says, and who have few opinions of their own or, if they have, are unable or reluctant to express them;

(c) a generation of children who have never been allowed the opportunity to develop self discipline, so that as soon as the teacher's back is turned, they are transformed into a bunch of wild and noisy infants who are rejoicing after a long spell of repression.

To avoid this last reaction, teachers employ the practice of putting a "senior" pupil in charge of listing the names of all who misbehave. This merely prolongs the period of supervision of the class and helps to alienate the "prefect" from the rest of the class.

/EFFECTS...

EFFECTS OF SCHOOL CONDITIONS ON TEACHER TRAINING

Conditions in the schools make the whole programme of teacher training an irrelevant ritual. In the first place, teaching methods learnt at the Teachers' Colleges all assume that certain minimal physical requirements exist in the classroom. They assume classes of a manageable size, a certain ease of oral communication between teacher and class and a degree of freedom of movement within the classroom. Where classrooms are virtually non-existent and where the circumstances of the school are so unfavourable to teaching, the training provided is of little value. The newly graduated teacher soon finds that the techniques that he has learnt are inoperable in the conditions in which he has to work. He has no alternative but to follow the example of those who have adjusted themselves to the conditions. In a very short time the effect of training is lost. There is very little noticeable difference between the actual teaching by a graduate of a teachers' college and that of an untrained teacher. Conversation with teachers often reveals that the trained teachers have a better understanding of children and a more tolerant attitude to their problems, but they have not been able to devise teaching methods to overcome the hindrances to learning created by the lack of facilities, overcrowding and noise.

It is imperative that the Ministry of Education and Culture should immediately initiate action to improve the physical conditions and plant of the primary schools at least to a level where minimally tolerable teaching conditions will allow effective learning in these schools. In the interim, the teachers' colleges should undertake a thorough investigation of school conditions and embark on a programme of experimental teaching practices aimed at achieving maximum results in the conditions that obtain in the schools. In this way, these institutions will be helping to solve a totally undesirable situation by creative and imaginative experimental effort. The results of their experimentation could then be published for the benefit of teachers already in the field.

Unless this is done, the large sums of money spent annually on the training of teachers will continue to be wasted.

It is against this background that the teaching of Language Arts has to be considered.

THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE ARTS SYLLABUS

The syllabus of work for Primary schools and the Infant Department contains the seeds from which have grown the present attitude to, and misconceptions about the language problems of the country. Originally published in 1956 it can take no account of recent findings in the field of language research and teaching methods particularly those which relate to the teaching of language in a contact situation like ours. It is not the aim of this report to lay the blame for this on those who prepared the syllabus so many years ago. However, we must point out the deficiencies in the document since it continues to be used even now, and indicate the areas in which future work of this kind needs to be done if a suitable syllabus for our language situation is to be prepared.

The Primary syllabus is defective in the following important areas:-

(a) It is based on a false assumption about the language learning problems of the school child because it fails to recognise the true linguistic situation of the country.

(b) It is unrealistic in its expectations and inadequate in providing a detailed breakdown of the steps that are intended to lead to the desired goal.

(c) It ignores the real teaching/learning situation in the schools especially with regard to (i) physical accommodation (ii) provision of material, (texts, libraries, visual aids etc).

(d) It is unbalanced being over demanding in some areas and unnecessarily unambitious in others.

A detailed examination of the above mentioned weaknesses is presented below.

(a) Attitude to the language learning problems

In the Foreword, the syllabus states:"In this country where the impact of various foreign languages has greatly influenced the common forms of speech and expression, and has considerably increased the teacher's task, every opportunity must be taken both in school and out of school, and in the formal English or other lessons, to correct common errors of speech as they occur; otherwise faulty expression or construction may, in the child's mind, acquire the sanction of usage. In

/lessons....

In lessons other than English, the correction can be made without interrupting the course of the lesson, but the wise teacher will note and collect such examples of faults for further treatment in the English lesson proper".

It is quite evident that those who drew up the syllabus saw the language of the child as a form of English in which there were mistakes, and hence the role of the teacher as essentially one of correcting mistakes in the speech and writing of the pupils. Instead of attempting to teach the total grammar of the English Language, (naturally a little at a time and in some natural or logical order), the syllabus contents itself with specifying a few isolated and not necessarily connected features of the English Language, e.g. the use of "is and are" "have and has" "the movable 's'" "singular and plural", as well as requiring the teaching of certain grammatical categories, e.g. masculine and feminine, knowledge of which does not necessarily lead to a more competent handling of the English Language. The idea that there may be two distinct languages at work with systematically distinct grammars is not recognised. The task of the English teacher is not merely to correct mistakes, but to introduce a new system - a different grammar - to his students, and it is in this latter respect that the approach of the school syllabus is entirely deficient.

Moreover, the syllabus fails to recognise the four basic skills that must be acquired if a language is to be properly learnt, viz. (1) the ability to understand the spoken word, (2) the ability to speak the language correctly, (3) the ability to read the language with full comprehension, (4) the ability to write the language correctly. Of these four, only one, reading, is dealt with in any detail. Listening skills are ignored, writing skills are confused with the mechanics of handwriting and attention to speaking is limited to the correction of faulty usage.

(b) It ignores the learning/teaching situation in the schools

In teaching situations such as those described earlier, no syllabus can be successfully operated unless special methods and techniques are devised for overcoming the obstacles to teaching in the school itself. Yet the syllabus completely ignores this problem and proceeds as if no problem at all existed. Children are expected to recite and read "with good expression, fluency and clearness", when often the teacher himself cannot be heard above the din. Pupils are required to do "individual library work" from standards one through five, when the vast

/majority....

majority of schools have no library, and many of those that boast of a library refer to an antiquated collection of "classics" and discarded text books. The pupils are expected to learn to write "a good cursive style, combining legibility with a pleasing appearance and a reasonable degree of speed," when it is common practice for five children to be squeezed into a desk intended for three, where there is not enough room for the pupils to lay their books side by side on the desk, let alone have the freedom of movement required to write properly.

(c) <u>It is unrealistic in its expectations</u>

According to the foreword we are told that:

"by the end of the course the pupil will be able to express himself, both in speech and writing, in standard grammatical English; and will be able to comprehend ideas similarly presented to him. He should further have imbibed notions on form and style and have developed an appreciation of the beauties of the language as exemplified in the prose and poetic works of some of the great writers".

If one considers the G.C.E. 'O' level results in English Language, one can readily appreciate how absurd the above aim of the <u>primary</u> school syllabus is. A brief look at a few aspects of the pupils' language competence towards the end of the primary school course will indicate that:-

(1) He is incapable of reading the lessons in his own reader without first being taught all the difficult words, (varying between 10 - 20 per page).

(2) He mumbles one word answers when asked a question.

(3) He misreads the directions given in other subjects like arithmetic.

(4) He finds it difficult to write the "statement" for his arithmetic problems.

(5) He makes nonsense of the few lines of poetry that he attempts to commit to memory.

(6) He needs to have the Government schools broadcasts translated for him before he can understand them.

In short he is deficient in all the basic skills of communication in English. It is hardly necessary, therefore for us to pursue the extent to which he has "imbibed notions of form and style" and "developed an appreciation of the beauties of the language."

/The syllabus...

The syllabus calls for the pupil to read fourteen recommended story books and novels and at least an equal number of other books in private library reading. But every teacher in the system complains that children are incapable of reading the next lesson in their reading books. The poetry syllabus calls for the child to learn approximately 350 lines of poetry by heart, (in standard I, two sets of 24 continuous lines, Standards II - III, two of 30 each, Standard IV, two of 40; in Standard V two of 50), and five complete poems. In addition they must know about rhyme, metre and rhythm. All this when the teachers, and doubtless the pupils too, are convinced of the uselessness of the exercise.

(d) It is unnecessarily undemanding in the area of language development

In contrast to the unrealistic expectations of the literary aspect of the syllabus, the demands of the language section are distressingly light. This is a reflection of the attitude implicit in the Foreword to the syllabus that as long as the common errors of speech are eradicated and the children are sufficiently saturated in good literature, their productive language competence would necessarily improve.

The grammatical structures to be learnt are in fact some of the more common areas of difference between English and Trinidadian vernacular, but the specific structures are not spelled out in sufficient detail to enable the teacher to recognise the scope of his task or to facilitate the proper ordering of his programme of work. One example of this will illustrate the vagueness of the syllabus. In standards I, II and III, the teacher is required to teach the use of "is and are""was and were". No further instructions are given. No detailed instruction is given as to what is to be taught in each class. It does not teach the verb 'to be' as a complete unit, but rather treats is/are as an agreement exercise. It fails to break down the work into manageable units similar to that given below.

(a) as copula in simple sentences with singular and plural subject

(b) as auxiliary verbs

(a) can be further sub divided -

(i) "is" with single count nouns

(ii) "is" with mass nouns

(iii) "is" with collective nouns

/(iv)...

(iv) "is" with pronouns he/she/it

(v) "are" with plural count nouns

(vi) "are" with pronouns you/we/they

Interrogative structures:

(vii) where + is/are.....

(viii) when + is/are.....

(ix) how + is/are.....

(x) who + is/are.....

(xi) what + is/are.....

(xii) subject verb inversion: is/are + subject....

(xiii) negation of (i) to (xii) above

(b) as auxiliary verb (a similar list can be prepared for this function).

Additional complications can then be added e.g. A singular head noun followed by a plural noun in a noun phrase (the group of children is ...), a plural head noun followed by a singular noun in a noun phrase, (the children in this class are ...).

It is only when the problem areas are properly identified and described in detail that effective teaching can be designed to eliminate a particular problem, and the present syllabus is defective in being unable to establish the areas where special teaching is required as well as in specifying the details that need attention.

In summary, it might be stated that the syllabus is inadequate because it fails to recognise the basic problems both of the linguistic and teaching/learning situation of the children in the country and consequently fails to distinguish the linguistic skills and habits that need to be acquired in order to use the English Language competently. Further, it places no emphasis on the oral and aural aspects of language development and in so doing contributes largely to the perpetuation of a totally undesirable method of language teaching.

/By providing...

By providing teachers with a list of items to be taught, the syllabus provides a check list by which a teacher can assess the work done. But grammatical features listed are so randomly selected, and unordered in presentation that they cannot effect a growth in linguistic competence on the part of the learner, which after all is the only criterion for success in the area of language teaching.

The following is a list of the items which the syllabus requires to be taught.

* means repetition of work already done
\+ means extension of work begun in the previous year

STANDARD I — PROGRAMME OF WORK IN SYLLABUS

The use of "I"
is and are; was, were
use of simple common nouns
movable 's'
word building
making simple sentences (a) with given words
(b) with pictures
use of 'not'
simple interrogative
singular - plural
use of words denoting action
oral reproduction of stories
oral composition
filling in blanks in sentences
written short stories; imaginative work

STANDARD II
use of capital letters, full stop and question mark
a, an
*is, are, was, were
*movable 's'
*revision of 'name words' and 'action words'
+word building
+sentence construction (with words/pictures)
use of past tense
use of comma
has/have
vocabulary work (related word groups)
+use of action words
+ word building, blank filling
homonyms
do/does
time - today, yesterday, tomorrow
masculine - feminine

/describing...

STANDARD II Contd.

describing words - size, colour, shape
+statements and questions
simple orders and commands
use of alternate and opposite words
+letter writing
correction of common faults
+story telling

STANDARD III
simple personal pronouns
*subject/verb agreement
corrected sentences on special topics
sequence of tenses
there is/are
+personal pronouns - subject and object
+masculine and feminine
+singular and plural (including compound nouns)
the article (definite, indefinite)
*revision of punctuation marks
+use of 'not'
*recognition of noun, verb, adjective, pronoun
comparison of adjective:- er, est
+present, past, future
meaning of common abbreviations
dimunitives of nouns
+letter writing
+story telling
+descriptive, narrative, imaginative composition

STANDARD IV
*revision of past three years work
use of adverb, preposition and conjunction
simple analysis
simple parsing
+expansion of simple sentences by enlarging subject and object
+exercises in punctuation
the paragraph
relative pronoun: who, whom, whose, which, that
+comparison of adjective and adverbs
use of prefixes and suffixes
+exercises in use of synonymns and antonymns
*revision of parts of speech
making simple summaries
+further exercises in parsing
use of dictionary
vocabulary extension

/STANDARD V...

STANDARD V

*revision of four years' work
+analysis of compound and complex sentences
verb: voice and mood
+more parsing
+revision of interrogative, imperative, negative
+combination and expansion of simple sentences into compound and complex sentences
figures of speech (personification, apostrophe, simile, metaphor)
*revision of noun, are, you, we
use of shall/will
*parsing and analysis
revision of use of inverted comma
exercises with prefixes and suffixes
rules of correct speech and correction of common errors, (general and local)
further rules of syntax
direct and indirect speech
essays on abstract themes
letterwriting (applications for employment, business letters etc.)
summaries (telegrams)
construction and use of simple index

THE INFANT SCHOOL SYLLABUS

The syllabus for the infant department is similar to the primary syllabus in its misunderstanding of the nature of the language problem of the children. It states that the aim of the language development programme is "to encourage the children to express themselves freely and spontaneously at all times." This is, of course, a laudable aim. But in order to arrive at this level of competence in English, (which the syllabus assumes to be the only language spoken), our children have to be taught the language, structure by structure, a procedure which calls for very careful planning and imaginative teaching. It is totally unrealistic to expect children to converse in grammatically correct English on a wide range of topics when English is not their first language, and when no effort had yet been made to teach it to them.

Nevertheless, the infant syllabus does recognise the importance of oral work and considerable time is allowed for this activity. If the time allocated for this work were properly utilised in following a well ordered language programme, very worthwhile results might be achieved.

/The syllabus....

The syllabus also places commendable emphasis on a variety of activities that are important in infant education: story-telling, drama, puppetry, "Wendy house", nursery rhymes etc. It calls for adequate libraries with well illustrated material in type suited to the infant eyes. The only pity is that in the conditions that exist in the schools, these activities are largely neglected.

The reading programme has as its objective "the development of clear and fluent speech." This seems to be quite odd. One would have thought that a rather more modest and relevant objective like "enabling the children to decode the written symbols into the sounds of speech and to discover the meaning of the written message," would have been more appropriate. Moreover, the methods of teaching implied by the texts recommended in the syllabus, concentrate on word and sentence recognition with little attention to phonic work at all. This process of learning places the emphasis on memorising word shapes rather than supplying the child with the key to decode the written forms of the language.

/The influence....

THE INFLUENCE OF THE COMMON ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

The Common Entrance Examination exerts a decidedly unhealthy influence on the work of the whole school, and particularly so in the fourth and fifth standards. The demand for secondary school places has made success at the Common Entrance Examinations the prime aim of the school programme and the sole criterion by which a school is rated both by the teachers and the public. The whole school programme is geared towards the examination. Children are screened off at an early age so as to be put into the stream that leads to the special class. Text books are chosen on the basis of the resemblance of the material contained in them to the format of the Common Entrance questions. 'Textbooks' which are no more than compilations of 'Intelligence Tests' appear on the Standard three syllabuses and Common Entrance papers in Arithmetic, English and Intelligence are almost indispensable in Standards four and five. Throughout the school system, children are being constantly subjected to multiple choice tests and blank filling exercises, much to the neglect of practice in free expression of ideas, and this, as far as English Language development is concerned, is a totally unsatisfactory method of either teaching or testing.

There are other ill effects of the Common Entrance Examination in the school programme. In an effort to secure the greatest measure of success for their schools and pupils, teachers tend to prepare children directly for the several sections of the examination. The traditional 'rules' of English Grammar are being committed to memory because it is held that the examination requires this kind of knowledge. Vocabulary exercises of all kinds, (masculine and feminine, synonymns and antonymns, supplying single words for phrases, etc.), spelling exercises in which the pupil is required to discover a word from a jumble of its letters, General Knowledge, which consists of learning hosts of unrelated facts of history, geography and science, all form part of the regular school programme. On the other hand, composition, which is not tested in the Common Entrance is given less and less attention as the child advances through the school.

The emphasis is on gearing for an examination - not following the curriculum. This is inevitable in any system which sets so high a premium on success in a particular examination.

/What is.....

What is additionally tragic about our situation is that teachers are in fact very much in the dark about the true nature of the examination for which they are preparing the children. Copies of the examination are never released to teachers and copying the tests is forbidden. The teachers' knowledge of the examination can be obtained only from the snippets of information supplied to them by the pupils who have written it, and from the practice tests conducted before the examination proper. This is, of course, completely unsatisfactory, for it means that the whole school programme is being altered in an effort to prepare for something about which only a vague and inaccurate impression is held.

Moreover, some teachers appear to regard the examination with grave doubts, if not active suspicion. They seem to consider the results as being often mystifying and unpredictable. They claim that totally unexpected results appear every year and this tends to shake the confidence of teacher and pupils alike. It is not the purpose of this study to attack or defend the present Common Entrance examination. Indeed we cannot, since 'for security reasons' we have not been permitted to see the actual test papers. We are concerned, however, that the whole school system could be so adversely influenced by something about which the public at large, and teachers in particular, are totally ignorant. It is quite useless to plead with teachers to educate their pupils as widely as possible when they are convinced that the critical examination in their pupils' lives, tests only specific knowledge in certain subject areas. It seems to us that the best way to clear the air of all suspicion and confusion is, (a) to release copies of the tests to the public, and (b) to provide a clear and accurate account of the method of selection to secondary schools. Comment will, of course, be forthcoming, but this in itself is useful if the content of the examination is to change and keep abreast of the rapidly changing curriculum.

THE TEACHING AS OBSERVED

Observation Procedure

The samples of teaching provided below indicate the difficulties involved in trying to describe in general terms, the teaching that is taking place in the schools. In spite of the broad areas of similarity of classroom conditions, there are individual pecularities in many schools which make it impossible to classify them all in the same category. Teachers, too, differ vastly in their abilities and attitudes and it would in no way be fair to make a general condemnation of their teaching methods. We would like here to reemphasise that the aim of this study is to help to effect a change in the teaching of English, and any criticisms made are not intended to ridicule the Ministry of Education and its officials, or the teachers in the system, but are seen as a necessary preliminary to any constructive work to be attempted in the area.

On arrival at the school, we ascertained from the principal, the times when English Language was taught in the different classes of the school. A schedule of class observations was then decided upon so as to enable us to view as much as possible of the teaching of English in the school.

Apart from the actual teaching, the following was noted: number of textbooks available to the class for the lesson in progress (if texts were required), the language of the teacher, the opportunity afforded the children to speak, the language of the children when they spoke, the attitude of the teacher to the children's language, the time spent by the teacher in speaking in relation to the time given to the children to speak. Where written work was being done, the kind of exercise and the extent to which it allowed the pupil to express himself creatively was noted. Opportunity was also taken on these occasions to discuss with the teacher the problems of learning and teaching English in his class.

After the first round of visits it was decided to supplement this type of first hand observation with a questionnaire designed to assist in obtaining information that could not be obtained by observation in the limited time at our disposal. The questionnaire aimed at finding out the teachers' opinions and attitudes on several important areas: the suitability, selection and use of textbooks requisitioned by the school, teaching methods employed and needed for proper teaching of English, the language normally used by children, the teaching of Grammar, the Language Arts syllabus. It also aimed at discovering from the teacher's responses, his degree of awareness of language problems of his pupils and his methods of meeting them. Finally, a second round of visits was made to some of the schools in order to check some of our conclusions about the conditions and teaching.

/The following...

The following samples of actual class observation are given to provide the teacher with as complete a picture as possible of the conditions and teaching prevalent in the schools today. They demonstrate a fair cross section of physical conditions of the classrooms and the teachers' competence in, and attitude to, the subjects they are teaching.

The following features are observable from the sample:-

(1) A full half day's work - A,B,C,D,E.
(2) Classroom congestion - B,C.
(3) Noise - B.
(4) Disturbance/inconvenience from unattended class A,B,C.
(5) Double/multiple stream classes - C,E.
(6) Conscientious teacher effort - A,B,C,J.
(7) Rule/definition based grammar teaching - C,E,F,N.
(8) Neglect of oral work - C,E.
(9) Teachers' ignorance / misunderstanding of matter/ method of teaching - G,H,J,L,M,N.
(10) Serious teacher indifference to work of class - D.
(11) Lack of pupils' materials, - B,E.
(12) Over emphasis on silence - A.
(13) Domineering teacher attitude - A,E.
(14) Unsuitable material for class - K.

The following notes were made during class visits.

Sample A Class: STD. 5

1. Devotions etc. 15 minutes

2. Roll call 3 minutes

After roll call teacher heads the blackboard:- Arithmetic multiplication of fractions. Usual details of date and day are also added.

3. Before beginning lesson the teacher goes through the ritual of "Stand! Sit! Hands off desks!" The lesson begins with a brief review of the previous week's work which was apparently addition and subtraction of fractions. The teacher invites the class to recall what was done during that lesson and proceeds to question boys individually about the mechanics of the operations. The teacher's voice is clear and well projected without being loud. His language is well sustained Trinidadian standard with deliberate insistence on final cluster realisations. His method of

/questioning....

questioning invites the boys merely to utter one or two words which fill the gap in his incomplete statement. For example:

Teacher: "You remember that we call those numbers ---"
Boys: "Mixed numbers".

Later in the class the 'blanks' in his speech included syllables. For example:
Teacher: "frac---"
Boys: "tions". 3 minutes

4. Following a one minute interruption 1 minute
by another teacher, he begins to present the lesson for the day, by working an example on the blackboard, while stating what he is doing. He then has two boys work two examples by telling them what do do. On completion of this he requests questions but there are none.
"Any questions?"
"No sir". 7 minutes

5. He then writes ten (10) problems on the board for the boys to work. 6 minutes

There is little chatter among the boys - borrowing of rulers and erasers etc. The boys seem to know what to do and they set about it in a workmanlike fashion. They work conscientiously.

6. He goes to unattended 5A to call roll and set them some work; has to interrupt his writing on the board to call for order in that class. 15 minutes

7. Returns to 5C, begins to work first problem, but boys complain and he gives them five more minutes to complete their work. Meanwhile, he checks their work by walking down the narrow aisle and advising individuals on their problems. During this check, he calls for silence in the class twice, although, in my view, the class was not really making more than a murmur.
"I hear a slight whisper".
"Some pencils are talking".
Most of the boys have finished their work and a couple are looking at books other than Arithmetic books.
10 minutes

8. Correction begins. Self correction of books. Individual boys work problems by filling the slots in his statements.

/Those correct....

"Those correct show hands. Those wrong stand." The teacher doesn't correct the boys who have made mistakes or got the sum wrong, but inquires whether they have seen their mistake. To this, the answer is always 'yes' and the correction proceeds. Meanwhile, the class next door is very impatient and their noise level has been rising. Not to an intolerable level, but enough to be noticed.

10 minutes

9. R.K. lesson - sermon style with minor slot filling operations and questions to class about whether they remember examples of certain of Christ's virtues. Essentially the boys know the area pretty well and no new information is transferred, only morals drawn from the examples provided. (Lesson has not been prepared in any real sense.)

(1) Consideration for friends; sick; poor.
(2) Necessity for prayer
Types of prayer - Adoration
Contrition
Thanks
Supplication

By my count, only eleven boys are really paying attention, and little whispered conversations are going on. The teacher's language is formal English with literary type sentences. e.g. "So impressed were the apostles..."

25 minutes

10. Back to correction of Arithmetic problems. Procedure as before. 11 minutes

11. Spelling test.
Words had been given in homework book and presumably intended to be learned. They may have come from a comprehension passage but there was no indicated link between them. None of the words was related to any specific spelling problem area except perhaps: "ie" "ei" heifer, niece.

The test consisted of the following words. Peculiarities in pronunciation and word meaning are included.
handkerchief (handk3tʃIf) / character / aisle / sincerely / picnic / wrestle / fatigue / heifer / (notIsʌbl) - context sentence.

/"If a....

"If a person is very observant he is what?"
(notɪsʌbl)
valuable / audible / guitar / edible / niece / forty
Same technique of correction as for Arithmetic.
Boys spell words and pronounce each word after having spelt it.
Pronunciation (gItʌ) corrected to (gIta)

Sample B

Class - Infants No. present - 28

8:45 School begins. Children line up in courtyard and enter school. Prayers, hymn, remarks by principal over public address. Roll call. 25 minutes

9:10 Teacher gets ready to begin teaching.
Parts of the body. Teacher points to parts of the body and calls on class to name them, then she calls the part and the children point it out on their own bodies.
10 minutes

9:20 Counting. Teacher counts with the class, the books on her desk and the pencils in a box. Distributes shells to all the children in the class. Class becomes a little noisy and she runs through the routine: "Hands up! Out! Down!" Then she counts with them up to six. Teacher has to shout all the time in order to be heard. Writes the following sums on the blackboard:-

5 + 1 =
4 + 2 =
3 + 3 =

Directs class to work out these sums by counting the appropriate number of shells. She works out sums with them counting shells to get the answers. When the answers are all written, the class is called upon to read the statements aloud. Teacher then writes:-

2 + 4 =
1 + 5 =

and works these out with class. (Noise from rest of school makes it impossible for teacher to be heard at the back).
25 minutes

9:45 Teacher hangs up the class calendar. Then she distributes sheets of paper to children. She instructs them to write

/"Today is....

"Today is Monday" which she has already written on the blackboard. She also tells them to copy the addition table which was done in the previous session.
Children without pencils have to be lent pencils, others have to get pencils sharpened. Teacher's time is largely taken up in performing these tasks. As children complete the work, teacher marks their papers,
All papers are marked in the period. 1 hour

10:45 Plasticine work. Teacher distributes plasticine to class and asks them to model shapes. Children very excited. They make balls, baskets of eggs etc. 45 minutes

End of morning session.

Sample C

Class 1B No. in class - 30 4 per desk, 12" each.
One blackboard 4' x 3' (class divided into 2 streams).

9:30 On our arrival, the "B" stream was doing Arithmetic.

9:55 Teacher works sums on the board. Children correct their work. On completion of blackboard work teacher allows those with all sums correct to go for recess. The others have to remain to write up their corrections.
25 minutes

The "A" stream during this time was working on three sums that were set them on the blackboard. At 10:10 they were still at it. Some were obviously finished and were either idle or talking.

10:12 Teacher walks around to inspect work of the "A" stream. Teacher of neighbouring class reports misbehaviour of some pupils.

10:15 "B" stream returns from recess and are given another sum to work.

10:35 Teacher works sum on board and tells class to correct their own work in copy books.

10:40 Teacher works the three sums set for the "A" stream since 9:00 a.m. Children told to make corrections. They take their books up to be marked as soon as they are finished.

/10:45....

10:45 "B" GROUP

Teacher writes on the board:

ENGLISH

A AN

Teacher then says to class:
"Write 'an' before a word which begins with a,e,i,o,u. Now tell me another letter, not a,e,i,o,u". Class offers b,d,l,f. Teacher writes these letters on the board and says:
"Write 'a' before words beginning with these letters."
She then writes on the board:

ox	bat	cap
eye	ant	pen

and says:
"What letter does this begin with"? (pointing to ox)
Class: O
Teacher: What will you write?
Class: an.

This procedure is followed for all the words on the board. Teacher then repeats the 'rule' for the use of 'a' and 'an' and sets the class the work of putting 'a' or 'an' before:

orange; bag; fish; egg; inkput; umbrella; arch; hat.

10:45 During this period, Group A is working on an exercise from their text books.

Male and female. "Fill in the blanks with the female of the word underlined."

Both the <u>bull</u> and the --- are in the field.
Bob and Pam are <u>brother</u> and ----.
The <u>lion</u> hunted for food for the ---.
Every <u>man</u> and --- went to the meeting.

10:55 Teacher sits at desk marking copybooks. <u>30 minutes</u>

11:15 Both groups of pupils idle. Teacher still at desk marking books.

/11:25....

11:25 Teacher 'revises' 'a' and 'an' with group A and then does the exercise on the board for Group B.

11:30 End of session.

Sample D

Class 5D No. in class - 28 3 per desk, 11" each.

9:00 On arrival class is doing Arithmetic from textbook. Teacher is absent. 30 minutes

9:30 Teacher returns to class. Sits at desk and works at coconut shell carving. Silence is maintained. 30 minutes

10:00 Teacher marks the work of those who come to him. Others in class idle. 20 minutes

10:20 Teacher gets up to work sums on the blackboard.

(1) 3/4 of 1,000,000

He questions the class on what to do.
Some of the class do not know. They do not know how to find 3/4 of 20. Teacher tells them:
"Divide by four and then multiply by three."
He then proceeds to work it on the board by multiplying by three and then dividing by four.

(2) Light travels at 186,000 miles per second. How far does it travel in five seconds? How much less than 1,000,000 is that?

Teacher tells class:
"Multiply by five and then take it away from 1,000,000. Understand that? Do it over now." 5 minutes

10:25 Teacher goes to back of class and cuts open coconut shells for carving. 15 minutes

10:40 Teacher works sum on the blackboard.

10:45 Recess

10:55 Class resumes. Teacher absent.

/11:05....

11:05 Teacher returns to class and sits at desk and works on coconut shells for ten (10) minutes.

11:15 Teacher goes to back of class and smokes a cigarette and talks to teacher of neighbouring class. 15 minutes

11:30 (Class is supposedly revising or doing corrections, but has been doing precious little but talking quietly since 11:00 a.m.)

Sample E

Class 2B No. present 37 in 2 streams.
2 blackboards (one for each stream)

9:45 GROUP A
Class is given Arithmetic problems from the blackboard.
Teacher works one sum on the blackboard and instructs the class to do the others. 3 minutes
Class works on in reasonable silence. 20 minutes

10:20 Group A goes for milk. 10 minutes

10:30 GROUP B
Teacher writes on blackboard:

ENGLISH
It started to rain. We went home.

She asks the class to 'join' these two sentences. One boy answers:
"It started to rain so we went home."
Teacher writes the sentence on the blackboard and instructs class to do exercise on page 6 of Hayden Richard's Junior English. 2 minutes
(Examination of text: the instructions to the exercise reads: "Join the following sentences using 'so'").

By 10:45 this group is largely idle. Most have completed only three sentences.

10:45 GROUP A
Teacher writes English exercise for this group that was doing Arithmetic before.

/SENTENCES...

ENGLISH

SENTENCES	COMMON NOUNS	PROPER NOUNS

Pearl writes a good letter.
My birthday comes in February.
Have you been to Couva?

Teacher asks class to read sentences aloud. She corrects class pronunciation of 'to'. "Not (tu) but (tʌ) "
She then gets class to recall the definition of a proper noun. They provide her with the information that it is "a special name of a person or place."
She also asks class to read the first sentence again. When this is done she asks:
"Have you seen the name of any special person or place?"
Class remains silent.
Teacher repeats the question several times before someone answers, "Pearl".
Teacher: Right! Now where are you going to put Pearl?"
Class is dumb. They are unable to see that the 'special name' Pearl must go into the Proper Noun column.
After several tries, one boy suggests that it be put under proper noun.
Teacher asks class to read the sentence again and then asks:
"Have you seen another noun?"
Class is dumb.
After several repetitions she painstakingly prises from the class that 'letter' is a noun and that it is not a special name.

Teacher: Read the next sentence. (i.e. Have you been to Couva?)
Class reads jerkily up to 'to'. They cannot recognise 'Couva'. Teacher calls the word for them and asks where and what is Couva. Class does not know.
Teacher continues in this way until all sentences have been "worked out".
She then tells them to start to write. 22 minutes

11:12 Section joining sentences idle. One or two bring up book to teacher to be marked.

11:15 Teacher goes to the blackboard and writes:

Put in 'a' or 'an'
- clock - pen - elephant - umbrella
- island - ostrich - desk - door

/She then...

She then calls up three children to read what she has just written. (This is obviously a backward group). Then she asks:
"What do you write before a,e,i,o,u?"
Group: "an"
Teacher goes through the list of words asking what letter each word begins with and getting from them which of the forms they would use. Then she tells them to do the exercise in their copybooks. 3 minutes

11:28 Children bring up their books to be marked.

11:30 End of session.

Sample F

Std. 3 English Grammar.

Class sits reading from textbook. They are revising the definitions of a noun and a verb while teacher marks copybooks. When marking is finished teacher asks class for definitions of Noun and Verb, and gets the definition from the textbook. Then she continues: "We all know what is a noun and what is a verb. Is there anybody who can stand up without looking at their book and say what is a pronoun?" No response from the class.

Teacher explains that a pronoun is a word used in place of a noun. She then writes a sentence on the blackboard and then reads it. "Lloyd's mother gave him a bar of chocolate", and says: "Look at your list of pronouns and see if you see a pronoun in the sentence."

Children refer to list of pronouns and eventually one says "him".

Other sentences from the text are done in the same manner. When the exercise is finished the teacher instructs the class to write it in their best handwriting.

9:45 - 11:00

/Sample G....

Sample G

Std. 1 Spelling

Teacher rules up the blackboard and writes the following:

feed	seed	weed
mend	bend	send
cage	age	page
feet	tent	stage

She points to the first word and says:
"This word is 'feed'. Spell feed.'
Class: f - e - e - d
Teacher proceeds to do the same for all the words
10 minutes

Teacher next writes the following on the board.
"tten", and says -
"What word has all these letters?"
Class remains silent awhile and then someone says "tent"
Teacher: "Correct".
Then she writes the following and asks the class to find the words that have been jumbled.

enbd	gea	dense
eefl	geac	eesd

Sample H

Class 1B

Is/are was/were

Sentences with blanks in which one of the four-is/are was/were-are to be put in are written on the blackboard and class is set to work.

At the end of the period, teacher asks one child to give her versior of the first sentence.

1st. P. The children is talking
T. This child says, "The children is talking". What is wrong with that?
2nd P. The children was talking.
T. No. Not correct.
3rd. P. The children were talking.
T. No.

/This mode...

This mode of questioning continues for some time until one pupil states:

4th P. The children are talking.
T. Yes. Why do we say 'are'?
Class: Because it is more than one.
Teacher writes the correct sentence on the board.
T. Now suppose we wanted to say that about yesterday, what would we say?
P. The children was talking
T. No. (Procedure as above until the correct answer is given).
P. The children were talking
T. Why is 'were' right?
No reply from class.
T. Because 'are' becomes 'were' in the past tense.
The other sentences are done in the same way.

Sample I

Class 5B Spelling

Teacher tells class of an accident in which the victim is taken to hospital etc. As he proceeds with the story he writes the following words on the blackboard:-

accident hospital casualty operation

He then tells class:

Look at the words. Spell it in your minds. Now write it in the air. (Children'write'the words in the air with their fingers).
Now close your eyes and spell it to yourselves.
(Class does as instructed).

Teacher then calls on an individual to spell a word without looking at the board. Those who fail are allowed to look at the word and spell it to themselves and then try again.

Sample J Std. 4 Reading

TEACHER:

Get out your reading books. Hands up! out! down! Page 139. Teacher reads the first sentence:

"'O well bowled! well bowled Johnson!"' cried the captain,

/catching....

catching up the ball and throwing it high into the air."

She repeats the sentence and then asks:
"Who is bowling? Who is the captain?"

Class answers with a little coaxing.

Teacher continues to read sentence by sentence, paraphrasing each sentence after reading it. Sometimes she questions the class about the facts in the sentence. The lesson is about a cricket match taken from Tom Brown's School Days, but the teacher is not at home with cricket and many of her paraphrases are inaccurate.

Teacher constantly drops final 's' even when reading. After the reading, the teacher moves on to the questions at the end. Teacher reads question:

"What was the result of the match?"
She paraphrases this as:" Who won the match?"

Class is asked to describe the picture in the lesson. Class supplies details of items in the picture but makes no attempt to say what the picture is about and teacher does not try to elicit it.

32 minutes

Vocabulary work based on lesson:

Teacher writes on board:-

WORDS	MEANING
applause	
astonishment	
compliment	
countenance	
deserted	
excitement	
favourite	
superb	
expectations	
triumph	
toughest	

After eight minutes teacher writes meaning of first word. Then she looks up meaning of next in the dictionary and writes the meaning. She continues in this fashion to the end. The class writes the meanings from the board after the teacher.

/Sample K....

Sample K

Class 1B No. present 31 No. pupils per desk - 5.
No. inches desk space per pupil - 10.

9:15 Comprehension.

Teacher writes on blackboard. "One cold winter's night I ran alone to the post office".

1. Was the sun shining?
2. Was I going to school?
3. Was it warm?
4. Was anyone with me?
5. Did I go slowly?

Teacher assists in word-identification, as pupils fail in their attempts although they spell the words. Children invited to read in chorus after the teacher. Teacher reads the first question and advises pupils on the procedure; one-word utterances not acceptable: "Answer in a complete way." Pupils questioned individually; when the correct answer is given, the teacher writes it on blackboard. The pupils in chorus say the answer a few times and then write it in their books. Teacher ticks the answer in the exercise books. The lesson proceeds in this fashion. The result is that all children have all questions correct in their copybooks.

Sample L

Std. 4 Grammar Complement of the verb

TEACHER: Anything that comes after the verb to be is the complement.
I will give an example.
Meena is eating.
Meena was playing.
Meena would be talking.
eating, playing, talking are all complements.

Teacher reads the definition of complement haltingly from a book. The definition is obviously incomprehensible to him and meaning less to the class. He reads some examples from the book and then sets homework; to pick out complements from a set of sentences.

Sample M

Std. 2 Grammar was/were

Teacher writes on the blackboard: Duck was Ducks were

/TEACHER:...

TEACHER: What is the difference in these two sentences?
CLASS: (A vague mumble with no clear answer).
TEACHER: One has 'was' and one has 'were'. Why do we use 'was'?
CLASS: Because it is one.
TEACHER: And why do we use 'were'?
CLASS: Because it is more than one.
TEACHER: What is more than one?
CLASS; Hesitation - silence. Finally -
ONE BOY: Two, three, four.
TEACHER: No! ducks.

Teacher then explains that 'was' and 'were' are used for past events and that 'was' is used for the singular and 'were' for the plural. Sets work to be done on the blackboard. Class to fill in blanks with 'was' or 'were'.

Sample N Subject: Remedial Reading

Teacher writes on the blackboard:

1. a as in baby
2. a as in cat
3. a as in call
4. a as in car

and asks class to read. Class reads as follows:-

1. /e/ as in/bebi/
2. /e/ as in /kyat/
3. /e/ as in /kɔ:l/
4. /e/ as in /ka/

Teacher writes the word "last" on the blackboard, and asks class which sound the'a'in "last" resembles most.

Someone in the class ventures: "call".
Teacher asks class to say "last" and then say "call".
"Are they alike?"
Class: No
Teacher: What is it like.
Some: /kyat/
Teacher: Yes.

He then instructs class to say the words aloud to compare the sounds before making their answers. He then sets the work to state which sound of 'a' is found in each of the following words:
garden; barrel; ball; charge; make; also; haste; basket; many; labour. 45 minutes

Work corrected on the board at the end of the period. This exercise, the teacher explained, was intended to help the backward readers in the class.

/ANALYSIS....

ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRE

The teachers

There are 282 teachers employed in the classes Infants I through standard 5, in the thirty (30) Project schools. Of these, 125 or 44.7% are trained and the remainder, 157 or 55.8% are untrained.

On the whole, as far as teaching performance is concerned it is impossible to separate the trained teacher from the untrained. In the first place, as can be seen from the examples provided, very little time is actually spent in teaching. Most of the class time is utilised in providing written work for the pupils and in marking exercises done at home or in class.

An analysis of the responses of the teachers to our questionnaire shows the following characteristics to be shared quite evenly by both trained and untrained teachers:

(a) a lack of specific knowledge or opinion about the children's learning problems;

(b) a paucity of fundamental teaching skills to deal with specific areas in the English programme;

(c) a general inability to evaluate the relative importance of the various sections of the programme and to recognise the consequences of not giving each its proper emphasis;

(d) a decided absence of purpose in the teaching; no idea of ultimate goals and no attempt at arriving at a goal by definite measurable steps in that direction;

(e) general ignorance of the use of diagnostic and remedial techniques particularly those applicable to English Language;

(f) an attitude of skepticism towards the idea of oral techniques of language teaching and a false idea of the nature of oral work;

(g) there is an unhealthy dependence on the textbooks and an overall resistance on the part of the teachers to devising lessons of their own to meet specific problems;

/(h)....

(h) a growing attitude of resignation on the part of the teacher which allows him to justify relaxing his efforts on the basis of an assumption that the teaching programme will achieve little against all the external forces that are piling up against the unfortunate pupil.

(i) an inadequate knowledge of their pupils real interests and pastimes and a consequent failure to capitalise on these important channels of motivation, stimulation and interest.

A close look at the actual responses to some of the questions asked will substantiate the criticisms made above. Table I below shows the teachers' expressed opinions about the source of the pupils' language problem.

TABLE I: TEACHERS STATED OPINIONS OF PROBLEM AREAS

Influence of home dialect	-	80
Poor knowledge of grammar	-	11
Wrong attitude to good speech (Children consider it suitable only for classroom - they are afraid of ridicule. There is a certain resistance to speaking like 'white people').	-	11
Restricted experience, resulting in few ideas	-	11
Unsuitable home environment	-	10
Poor reading ability	-	9
Lack of textbooks	-	7
Failure to use Grammar rules taught	-	6
Unsuitable text books	-	3
Common entrance examination	-	1

It will be noted that teachers are able to identify some of the symptoms and contributory factors but are unable to specify the real sources of the children's language problem.

The teachers' stated aims for the year give no clear indication that they have devised practical programmes of work for specific problem areas in the language syllabus.

TABLE II: TEACHERS STATED AIMS FOR THE YEAR

(a) Improve the standard of English both oral and written to the point of correctness and fluency	-	48

/(b) To....

(b) To cover the syllabus thoroughly and so prepare pupils for the next class - 27

(c) To help to develop well rounded, responsible personalities of the pupils - 14

(d) To get pupils to pass the Common Entrance examination - 14

(e) Maximum development of each pupil - 13

(f) To create an environment stimulating to learning and a love for enquiry - 10

(g) To prepare class for secondary school - 3

(h) To overcome the influence of faulty speech habits - 3

(i) Keeping children occupied until such time as the Ministry sees fit to replace the class teacher who is on maternity leave - 1

In actual teaching, the allocation of time to written and oral work reveals the imbalance in favour of written over oral. This has, of course, been commented on in the section on physical conditions, but the teachers' opinions about the adequacy of the oral work done indicate that they are quite satisfied with the present time allocations.

TABLE III: PERIODS OF WRITTEN WORK PER WEEK BY CLASS

Subject	Inf 1	Inf 2	Std 1	Std 2	Std 3	Std 4	Std 5
Composition	1.0	2.0	2.0	1.6	1.5	1.3	2.0
Dictation	0	0	1.2	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Grammar from text	0	1.0	3.0	2.5	2.5	2.0	4.5
Spelling	5.5	4.0	4.0	3.0	2.5	2.5	4.0
Exercises from text	2.5	4.0	5.0	3.0	3.0	2.5	4.0
Word study	1.0	0.4	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Comprehension	0	0	0.5	1.0	1.0	2.0	4.0
General Knowledge	0	0	0	0.5	0.3	0	0
TOTAL	10.0	11.4	16.3	13.1	12.3	11.8	20.0

/TABLE IV....

TABLE IV: ORAL WORK DONE IN CLASS: NO. PERIODS PER WEEK BY CLASS AND TRAINED/UNTRAINED

	Inf 1	Inf 2	Std 1	Std 2	Std 3	Std 4	Std 5
Trained	21	12	7	4	5	4	4
Untrained	10	9	6	6	3	4	4

TABLE V: TEACHERS' OPINION OF ADEQUACY OF TIME ALLOCATED TO ORAL WORK

	Adequate	Inadequate
Trained	91	9
Untrained	97	3

Not only is the teaching programme heavily weighted in favour of silent written work, but the oral work does little to help the pupil to develop a mastery of the English Language that he is attempting to learn - or perhaps more accurately - that he is expected to learn without really being taught. In any proper language teaching programme, the learner is introduced to the structures of the new language in a gradual, methodical fashion. He is given an opportunity to hear the new structures in context and provided with the opportunities to repeat them in a number of suitable contexts until it becomes productive. The work in this regard must be intensive; it must be highly organised. Oral work is essential as it is only by constant exposure and practice that skills and habits are produced. The oral work done in the schools, limited as it is, in no way attempts to achieve these objectives. The work is unstructured, haphazard and aimless and, as far as developing language skills is concerned, useless. The list of activities classified as oral work by the teachers in the project schools bears ample witness to these remarks.

TABLE VI: ORAL WORK DONE

Reading: Individual / Group	Story telling
Oral composition	Correction of faulty grammar
Comprehension	Learning quotations
Pattern reading	Grammar
Speech training	Tables
Spelling	Counting
Word building	

/From the...

From the above table it would seem that three of these activities - oral composition, story telling and correction of faulty grammar - ought to be of some assistance to the learner of English. While it is not intended within this chapter to go into detail about the manner in which these classes are conducted, it must be stated that they do not meet our criteria of effective language teaching because:-

(1) the material dealt with is completely unstructured; that is, in any one lesson several new features or structures of the language are introduced in a completely random fashion;

(2) they are not intensive; that is, the pupils are not given abundant opportunity to hear and practice new structures; and,

(3) they do not have as their prime objective, the acquisition of linguistic competence, but instead, such other objectives as -
   (a) stimulation of ideas,
   (b) repetition of facts already taught or read,
   (c) learning of miscellaneous grammar rules.

WRITTEN WORK

It has already been indicated that the emphasis on written work has been largely influenced by the physical conditions in the school. More will be said in the next chapter. But one aspect of written work - composition - must be taken up here since it reflects the teachers' competence and attitude to the subject. Compositions are very often given for homework and as such they do not fall into that group of activities that can be excused on the grounds of inadequate time, space or material. There are several subjects for composition that the primary school pupil can expect in every year of his school life. In some cases this might be tolerable if it was seen that standards of achievement were progressively greater, but an examination of the written work indicates that in most cases, the only increase in expectation as the child grows older is in the matter of length.

According to the time-tables of most classes, composition is given once a week, yet no teacher was able to supply more than half dozen topics for composition and this latter figure rather than that of the time-table seems to be the one corroborated by the pupils' exercise books. The following table indicates the titles and the frequency with which they are given in the different classes of the project schools.

/TABLE VII...

TABLE VII: COMPOSITIONS SUBJECTS - CLASSES

Compositions	Classes				
	STD 1	STD 2	STD 3	STD 4	STD 5
Myself	6	2	2	1	2
My family	2	1	0	1	1
My friends	0	1	8	2	1
My home	3	2	1	2	1
Where I live	1	4	2	1	3
School	8	5	5	2	4
Class	5	2	5	2	0
Pets	9	3	3	3	2
Hobby	-	1	-	-	-
Other animals	17	9	0	3	1
Vacations	3	5	6	1	3
Outings	-	-	-	3	3
Festivals	4	2	0	1	2
Reproduction of stories	2	1	3	1	4
Toys	1	0	1	0	0
My ambition	0	0	1	3	1
Letters	3	3	9	10	19
Sports	2	1	0	0	0
Gardens	2	0	3	1	1
A day at the seaside	0	0	1	2	3
A day in the woods	0	0	0	2	0
Weather	1	2	1	1	1
A day I will never forget					1
The most outstanding school day in my life					1
A place of interest in your island				1	
How I will spend $100.00.				1	
The haunted house				1	
The best day I've spent			1		
Local incidents	1				
Homes of creatures	1				
Days of the week	1				
Colours	1				
Trees	2				
The orange	1		1		
The seed	1				
Leaves	1				
Water	1				
Fire	1				
The bamboo	1				
The coconut - its uses		1	2		
The policeman		1			

/Crop time...

	STD 1	STD 2	STD 3	STD 4	STD 5
Crop time		1	1		1
My teacher		1		2	
The conch shell		1			
The Christmas party		1			
The grapefruit			2		
Tractor			1		
Bicycle			1		
An accident			1		
Fishes				1	
A school day				1	
A visit to the market				1	
The church I like best					1
A house on fire					1
My dream house					1
An afternoon at the bazaar					1
A labourer at work					1
A child in a crib					1
An old lady					1
A little girl					1
An elderly clergyman seated in his study					1
Writing stories from outlines					2
A journey to school					1
Road safety					1
A ramble					1
A vivid dream					1
A good book					1
Keep it a secret					1
Autobiography of the sun					1
Why I go to church					1
If I won the national lottery					1
My new shoes					1
The best story I ever read					1

The next three tables, each taken in isolation, reveal apparently contradictory attitudes of our teachers. Table VIII indicates the extent to which the teacher relies on the use of pupils' text books. In many cases, in spite of the number of texts that children have to purchase, and the additional number of supplementary texts used by the teachers, some teachers clamour for more pupils' books. The implications of these attitudes for parents' pockets are alarming!

Table IX seems to contradict the above attitude. Here approximately half of our teachers are shown to be willing to set aside pupils' text books in favour of teachers' guides and teaching materials provided for the teacher, and only 30% of the teachers are in favour of retaining the pupils' text books.

/Table X...

Table X indicates that 85% of teachers are of the opinion that grammar rules must be taught in school if the children's English is to improve. When we consider that many of the new pupils'texts tend to de-emphasise the memorization and formal learning of grammar rules, we are puzzled to understand why these teachers still rely so heavily on them.

Yet considered together, these three tables indicate an awareness on the part of the teacher that all is not well in the teaching of English. As has already been indicated, teachers do not recognise the nature of the problem, nor even the specific problem areas, but it is quite evident that they do recognise that something is wrong. The almost frantic search for a solution can be seen in the use of a multiplicity of texts in the classroom, in their willingness to try something new, even something which they feel to be as radically new as casting aside the pupils' textbooks and using a teachers' guide and specially prepared materials. This, for a group of people who are traditionally conservative in the extreme, is a significant and heartening attitude. The almost overwhelming support given to what seems to be a reversion to outmoded teaching - that of formally learning of grammar rules - is merely another manifestation of the search for anything that will be effective. This consciousness, that something needs to be done and the willingness to try something new, provided it offers some hope for success, is probably the most reassuring feature of this aspect of the investigation. For, if the Ministry of Education can capitalise on the present state of teacher attitude with constructive programmes of retraining, much could be done even before the final results of this study are published.

TEACHERS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE USE OF TEACHERS' GUIDE AND SPECIALLY PREPARED MATERIALS VS USE OF PUPILS' TEXTBOOKS

TABLE IX	Guides and special materials for whole language arts	Guides and special materials for part only	Pupils' textbooks
Trained	40%	30%	30%
Untrained	52%	28%	20%
Total	46%	25%	29%

ATTITUDE TO GRAMMAR RULES TABLE X		
(a) Grammar - rules must be formally taught	143	85%
(b) Some rules should be formally taught, but not all	18	10%
(c) No rules should be formally taught	8	5%

/The followinq....

The following areas were listed by teachers as being the most important:

Subject/verb agreement
Noun/pronoun inflection
Punctuation
Synonyms and antonyms
Sentence construction

TABLE XI

AVERAGE NUMBER OF TEXTS USED IN CLASS

Class	No. Basic Texts Required	Supplementary Texts Used	Additional Texts Required by Teacher
Inf. 1	2	2	.52
Inf. 2	3	2	.20
Std. 1	3	2	.57
Std. 2	3	1	.28
Std. 3	3	2	.28
Std. 4	4	2	.68
Std. 5	5	2	.71

TABLE XII

PERCENTAGE OF PUPILS OWNING TEXTS

CLASS	Texts used 5 days out of 5	Texts used 4 out of 5	Texts used 3 out of 5	Texts used 2 out of 5	Texts used 1 out of 5	Texts used less than 1 out of 5
Inf 1	50%	39%	55%	9 5%	-	-
Inf 2	69%	32%	64%	15%	62%	-
Std 1	77%	47%	56%	46%	45%	37%
Std.2	59%	70%	60%	52%	38%	18%
Std 3	69%	77%	43%	54%	57%	24%
Std 4	72%	86%	66%	64%	51%	32%
Std 5	72%	58%	71%	64%	58%	58%

TABLE XIII

TEACHERS ASSESSMENT OF TEXT BOOKS USED BY PUPILS

Class	Good	Mainly good	Mainly bad	Bad
Inf. 1	73	28	-	-
Inf. 2	81	15	-	3
Std. 1	64	35	-	1
Std. 2	66	28	1	4
Std. 3	77	22	-	1
Std. 4	68	27	3	1
Std. 5	76	23	-	.8

THE TEACHING

The Infant School

In many respects the infant section of the schools can be considered the most fortunate. Apart from Std. V. or Common Entrance class, it is the best supplied with trained teachers. Teachers here obviously spend more time in preparing visual aids and play materials for their classes than in any other part of the school. It is very often the only section of the school where pupils are able to progress at their own rate. It is the class that is the furthest removed from the anxiety associated with Common Entrance examination and the rigours of preparing for it. It is the section in which the teacher can proceed with the business of education unfettered by the external pressures that affect his colleagues in the upper school.

It is not surprising, therefore, to find that the classroom atmosphere, teacher-pupil relationship and pupil participation in the learning/teaching process are at the highest level in the infant departments of the schools. In the vast majority (perhaps in all) of the schools, the teacher in the reception class is to her pupils much more than a teacher, because she behaves towards her charges in a way that inspires their confidence and affection. Yet one feels that in spite of these relatively favourable conditions and in spite of the good work that is undoubtedly done in some schools the infant departments fall short of expectations.

The Language Arts consists of a wide range of activities; reading, chats, recitation, story-telling, spelling, writing and some elements of grammar. These activities are discussed briefly below.

READING IN THE INFANT SCHOOL

As the textbook list indicates, the Janet and John and Happy Venture Readers are the most popular texts in the infant department. These texts employ the "look and say" approach to reading. The teacher normally prepares the sentences to be learnt with her class by writing new words on the board and getting the class to repeat them after her. The lesson is then read to the class from the text phrase by phrase, and the class repeats it. Sometimes the whole of the lesson is written on the board and taught to the children. The next day the children are examined individually. Those who read faultlessly move on to the next section while those who falter over words in the section have to repeat the lesson.

/The .....

The reading of the children is on the whole expressionless and disjointed. The main concern seems to be with reading each word correctly, rather than making sense of the story. If the child pronounces all the words correctly he will pass; if not, he will have to repeat it the next day. This unsatisfactory type of reading cannot be blamed solely on the child, for very often the lesson is taught by the teacher calling each word separately and having the class repeat it before proceeding to the next.

This word by word teaching, with its emphasis on the proper pronunciation of each item, results in the selection of citation forms of certain words (e.g. the and a), in preference to the more suitable forms of continuous speech and conveys to the child the impression that the recognition of individual words, rather than the sense of the passage, is all important.

The "look and say" method in reading needs to be complemented by organised phonic work. Yet little phonic work is done. Indeed, it is the opinion of many of the teachers in the middle and upper school that the poor reading ability of pupils is due to the complete ignorance of the phonic method. In some schools phonic word lists were on display in the classrooms but it was discovered that these were often used as spelling lists only, with no attempt to associate sound with symbol in the children's minds.

In some schools the wall pictures that accompany the textbooks are used by the teachers and good use is also made of flash cards and sentence strips.

PRIVATE READING

Few schools have class libraries and suitable books for infants are very scarce. In only one school was there a reasonable selection of infant reading material. A period is set aside for private reading and there are sufficient books for each child to have his own book to read. Children here were quite enthusiastic about reading and looked forward to this period eagerly.

CHATS

The need to give infants an opportunity to chat about the things that take place around them, is recognised in all the schools. Every morning session includes a period for chats when individuals tell the class about their experiences. The child is given the opportunity to express himself freely on a subject of

/his.....

his own choice and of which he has first-hand knowledge. Apart altogether from aspects of personality development that this activity affords, its potential for language development is enormous. Yet it must be admitted that in practice this activity achieves little of what it promises. Teachers are unable to get children enthused about their every day lives or to overcome their shyness sufficiently, to speak freely about the things they like. In most cases the teacher has to pry almost inaudible one word answers out of unwilling conscripts and even when, with snapping fingers, the odd enthusiast demands a chance to be heard, his contribution is little more than a badly constructed phrase. It is left to the teacher to make something out of these meagre offerings and she does so by expanding the monosyllables into an indirect statement which she tells the class, "Sushila said she went for water this morning".

STORY TELLING AND NURSERY RHYMES

Where "chats" fail, story-telling and nursery rhymes succeed. Children seem to be quite willing to repeat fairly long sequences that they have learnt by heart and hands are ever in the air when the teacher calls for volunteers to recite. Yet the full potential of this activity is not realised. Rhymes are often chosen with specific aims in mind. e.g. to explain the meanings of words like "up", "down", "in", "away" etc. and this becomes the main consideration of the teacher. In addition most teachers insist on clear audible speech on the part of those reciting and a few even expect the performance to include the "actions" that the words suggest.

Yet one finds that there is almost no transfer of the language structure from the rhymes and stories learnt to the productive language of the child. Indeed, in some cases one wonders if the structures are ever really learnt for it seems that the opposite process, that of imposing the structures of the vernacular on the rhymes and stories, occurs instead. In one school, many of the children in the class continued to say "away Robin run" although the past tense "ran" was repeatedly stressed by the teacher and rhymed with "can" in the next line.

WRITING

Writing in the infant department is largely a matter of handwriting practice in which the class copies words or sentences from the board and as such does not concern this investigation.

/There .....

There are schools, however, where statements elicited from the pupils are written on the blackboard. These are then read by the class and later written in their copybooks. In one school the teacher does get the class to produce a "story" which is written on the blackboard. After this is read and illustrated, it is copied by the class. The teacher herself writes the story on a sheet of bristol board and it is used, along with others similarly produced, for supplementary class reading.

TEACHER MADE MATERIALS

The infant departments in most schools can be easily recognised by the number of wall charts on display. Some of these are the reading charts that accompany the reading schemes but many of them are produced by the teachers themselves. While the value of wall charts cannot be denied, one would wish on occasions that the teachers display greater imagination and awareness of the pupils' environment in the selection of pictures. Large glossy coloured pictures of expensively draped and carpeted living rooms complete with fire place appear on the walls of a poor rural school with the label "my home" attached to it. Similarly irrelevant illustrations appear in the charts that show "the food we eat" and "our family".

There is no doubt that some of these pictures are beautiful and attractive but the matter is so foreign that the child cannot identify with them and such impact as it has on the child is of the wrong kind. Charts designed and painted by the teachers themselves to fulfil a particular need would be far more effective and, whatever they lose by way of artistic value, would be more than compensated for by their relevance and immediate impact.

THE "BIG" SCHOOL

The main difference between the infant department and the "big" school seems to lie more in the attitudes of the teachers than in anything else. The child who is promoted to Std. I is considered to have grown out of his infancy completely. He should no longer think like an infant; he must put away the things of infancy. And among the things of infancy that the school puts away for him are the individual attention formerly given him by his teacher and the familiar charts, aids and methods that stimulated and sustained his mental development before. In their place the system substitutes the tamarind rod.

/As.....

As far as Language Arts is concerned, the main difference seems to lie in the shift of emphasis from oral work to written work. Where oral work is attempted, as in reading, the teacher pays more attention to the progress of the class as a whole than to the difficulties of the individual. One teacher explained that "the child has now got to learn to read with the rest of the class and not by himself alone".

READING

The greatest problem that faces the Std. I child arises out of the fact that there is no properly graded reading scheme in use in the schools. The Readers most used in the infant department are the Janet and John and the Happy Venture Readers, the overwhelming favourite in Standards I-V, the West Indian Readers.

It is difficult to conceive how this situation came into being or how it has existed for so long. The West Indian Readers, written over forty years ago, employ the phonic approach to reading. Primers I and 2 and the Introductory provided the basic phonic rules which, it was expected, the child could use to read later books. When the "look and say" series replaced the West Indian Readers in the infant department nothing was introduced to bridge the gap between the two types of Readers. There is no element of continuity at all between these series of Readers. In the infant series the books are heavily illustrated, the vocabulary is carefully graded. The material however, is selected with a view to catching the interest of the English child. The West Indian Readers pay scant regard to vocabulary selection. Over a score of new words are introduced in the first lesson. Illustrations are comparatively few and decidedly dull. The material seems to have been selected with the strict and uncompromising grandfather's view of what is good for the child rather than what is appealing to him. The great wonder is not that so many lose interest in reading but that there are some who do not. It might be mentioned that work on the complete rewriting of the West Indian Readers has begun and that the first books in the series are already on the market.

In three schools only, there was an adjustment class for children who could not measure up to the work o of Std. I. In another, where there was no adjustment class as such, the slower readers continued to read from the Janet and John or Happy Venture Book 4. In all other schools, regardless of their reading competence, children were immediately confronted with the task of mastering the West Indian Readers.

/In.....

In most schools the task of teaching the class a new lesson takes between one and two weeks. Even then teachers admit that all the children do not know it. But the wheels of progress cannot be held back and the class as a whole proceeds to the next lesson. In spite of the obvious difficulties that the pupils encounter, teachers all acclaim the virtues of the texts and lay the blame for their difficulties and failures in teaching reading on the pupils, not the books.

The method of teaching reading is almost universally the same. First, the difficult words in the passage are written on the board. The children are then taught to read them. The passage is then read by the teacher who explains difficulties in the text as he goes along. The children at this time follow the reading silently in their books. The class next reads in chorus then in smaller groups. The section is set for homework. The next day the reading is examined. Small groups (usually the children in one or two desks at a time) are called upon to read small sections. If the reading is good the next group is asked to continue. The teacher is able to detect individuals who are obviously unable to read all the words in the section examined. Those who do not know the lesson are reprimanded. The group reading method has resulted in most schools in a stacatto word by word type of reading which in no way indicates that the children understand what is being read. The class "passes" a lesson when the teacher is satisfied that the words in the lesson can be recognised and called by the majority of the children.

It must be stated that teachers on the whole recognise the problem but seem to be powerless to remedy it. In a few cases teachers have tried to vary the reading texts and one teacher actually uses the "Nine folk tales" as the basic reader in his class. But even when this is done the methods employed are the same as described before.

The reading problem reveals itself in other areas in the school syllabus where the class is given printed material on the assumption that it can be read. Teachers agree that often a child's poor performance in Arithmetic is attributable more to his lack of comprehension than to any deficiency in his computational skills. In the "Comprehension" period, many teachers have first to teach the class to read the passage set for comprehension before allowing them to proceed with the questions (which incidentally they have to be taught to read as well).

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Sufficient has been written here to indicate that the reading problem and(all its attendant problems) is a critical one. One can no longer afford to close one's eyes to it or try to lay the blame on any single factor. Clearly the true solution can only lie in remedying several

(i) Teaching methods have to be developed which will be effective in our linguistic situation as well as in our school environment;

(ii) Textbooks must be produced which take account of the linguistic problems of the children as well as their culture;

(iii) The whole range of reading matter in the schools (textbooks in Geography, History, Literature, Arithmetic), will have to be revised as well, so that the child's progress in any field is not hindered by factors which have nothing to do with his ability in that field.

LIBRARIES

On the whole, school libraries are hopelessly inadequate. They contain few books that children might find interesting and a collection of foreign textbooks. In one school there is a reading room (one of the class-rooms) where children are encouraged to read. The room is quite well used. Children come to school early and stay in at lunchtime to read, but the selection of books is very small and it is feared that if the stock is not increased quickly, interest will flag.

Some schools try to provide class libraries. Children are at liberty to take a book from the book shelves and read whenever they have finished the work assigned to the class. The library van visits some of the schools and where this is done children are encouraged to take advantage of the service.

In the absence of an adequate supply of books in schools and in the light of the experience of some Principals that theft and vandalism make the provision of adequate libraries a decided risk, there seems to be room for greater collaboration between the library services and the schools. Perhaps a system can be worked out whereby the school (not individual pupils)

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is loaned a large selection of books for a specified period and these are then made available to the children. The school rather than the child will be responsible for the books and the teachers will be able to assist the children in the selection of books that are best suited to their reading ability and interests. The constant replacement of stock every month or so will vastly increase the range of titles available to the children.

WRITTEN WORK

(Grammar)

In has already been indicated that the physical conditions prevalent in most schools force teachers to opt to devote most of the school day to written work of the easily marked type. The work largely requires: supplying the correct forms of verbs in sentences, selecting the correct one of a pair of homonymns, writing the plural of given nouns, converting adjectives into adverbs, etc. A considerable amount of vocabulary work is also done. In one school, children in the Common Entrance class spent the whole morning finding the meanings of a long list of words with the aid of dictionaries, Intelligence tests and other Common Entrance type papers receive high priority in the 4th and 5th Standards but evidence of their influence on the teaching in the school can sometimes be seen even in the 1st and 2nd Standards.

A special word is appropriate on exercises involving the use of 'is' and 'are' and 'have' and 'has'. The investigators have noted that similar exercises on the use of 'is/are' and'have/has' are set for all classes from the infants to Standard V. The format never varies: "Use 'is' or 'are' in their proper places in the following sentences." A series of sentences with the appropriate blanks is then written on the board and the children set to work. There was only one school visited in which 'is/are' was not being examined in one of the classes. In this school, one class was doing 'was' and 'were'.

That this item has to be examined and corrected throughout the school ought to point to the obvious - that the teaching method adopted is not effective. Yet no change in the teaching has been seen. Indeed, if the truth be told, it is never really taught. Children are told (quite inexactly) in the infant department and in Std. I that you use 'is' when the subject is 'one thing' and 'are' when it is 'more than one'. From then

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on, they are expected to apply the rule, and, it would seem, improve by being tested rather than by being taught. What is said of the teaching of 'is and are' may well be said of other grammatical features. It is only because these latter are introduced later in the teaching programme that they are not so frequently observed. The teachers' assumption is that language can be acquired by applying general grammatical rules to specific situations. The process of learning by testing has become the rule rather than the exception of the system. In many schools, the more formal aspects of grammar like parsing and analysis are taught, and the opinion of the teachers is that the requirements of Common Entrance examination make such teaching of grammar necessary.

COMPOSITION

Composition of some sort is given throughout the school. In the infant department it consists of writing one or two sentences on some topic; in the higher classes the teacher insists on proper paragraphing, 'introduction, body and conclusion'. In some schools, composition is not done at all in the Common Entrance classes, for the stress on getting passes in the examination makes it impossible to devote time to this "non-examination subject".

The teaching practice here is fairly universal. A topic is written on the board and the children are invited to state their ideas in sentences about it. Some of these sentences are written on the board. These are to be taken as 'points' on the topic. After the discussion, the class is asked to write the composition using the points on the board.

Here one sees an attempt to give the children an opportunity to express themselves freely. They re all invited to speak and, theoretically, the result of the discussion is a consensus of group effort. But, in fact, this is not the case. Very early in the class discussion it becomes obvious that there is such diversity of opinion that the teacher has to select only those offerings that would go to make up a composition with some sort of unity. The suggestions of those children with divergent views are gradually ignored by the teacher; he merely listens to them but does not write them on the board. In other cases, the teacher himself imposes his views on the class by his manner of questioning and his attitude to the replies he receives. In

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both cases the final result is not spontaneous expression on the part of most of the class since they are forced to accept ideas that are not their own. Thus, what gives promise of a genuine exercise in originality and creativeness becomes one of restriction, and sets the child off on the practice of suppressing his own views in favour to those that will please 'sir' or 'miss'.

CONCLUSION

In this report the current Language Arts Programme has been subjected to a searching investigation and, understandably, many weaknesses and shortcomings have been revealed. Nevertheless, as we have stressed before, this report is intended as a positive and constructive effort to remedy the language teaching methods and programmes at present used in the schools. The review of the present practices is only the first step in the programme. The development of new materials and methodology must now be planned and put into operation. In the interim, positive remedial action should include the following:

(a) Instruction of all teachers in the basic features of the vernacular and its implications for the learning of English.

(b) A re-learning by teachers of the grammar of English with emphasis on its structure, and the points of difference between it and the local vernacular.

(c) The extension of the training of teachers' college lecturers in English so as to enable them to serve as instructors in (a) and (b) as well as to initiate and co-ordinate experimental teaching projects to remedy specific learning problems in the language programme.

(d) The training of supervisors to enable them to advise Principals and teachers on the new emphases needed in the Language Arts programme.

(e) The establishment in the teachers' colleges of small research units headed by the language tutors in each college and co-ordinated by the curriculum supervisor for English.

(f) The setting up of a curriculum development project to prepare materials which take account of the latest linguistic and pedagogical findings as well as the physical factors in operation in the schools.

The above can be implemented only after certain necessary preliminaries are completed. An adequate description of the vernacular and its influence on the children's learning must be prepared and published. Comprehensive courses for training college lecturers and supervisors must be developed. Imaginative

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use must be made of the Publications Unit to propagate to all teachers the attitudes, aims and methods of a new language teaching programme as well as the problems likely to be encountered in implementing it. The teachers' colleges must begin to provide their students with a knowledge of the linguistic problems of the country and instil in them an attitude of experimentation in their teaching. Finally, when all of this is done a new curriculum can be developed, or more accurately, a new curriculum will have emerged from the combined effort.

It must not be thought that all these ideas are no further advanced than the planning stage. Some of them have already been initiated and others are about to become a reality. The teachers' colleges curriculum is already geared towards the new teaching and a section of the Language Course deals specifically with problems of the vernacular and teaching methods required in our school situation. From next year, special experimental projects are scheduled to be undertaken by tutors and students. Teachers of English in secondary schools and the teachers trained for the Junior Secondary School have been exposed to some of the basic elements of the grammar of the vernacular and its influence on the acquisition of English. The publication of a description of the vernacular along with suggestions for the teaching of English Language in our schools is soon to be produced by this research project. A training course for the upgrading of Lecturers and Supervisors has already been outlined.

The above details have been given to underline the seriousness of the researchers in the enormous practical work that lies ahead if successful language teaching is to be implemented. The project is forging ahead with its limited human resources. It is to be hoped that the Ministry will accept this report in the spirit in which it was written and respond to it with all the support at its command.

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